

“What becomes,” the song asks,

“of the broken-hearted / Who have loved
and now departed?” As if they formed a category
separate from the rest of us. As if, perhaps, we listeners
tapping our feet to the beat of this early rouser
formed a rare, elite corps that has never known
rejection. Never watched as our electorate
recast its votes away from us. Or never heard
the door slam, and the heated footsteps ringing
their diminuendo trail out into the night. As if
in the lines of our faces, every day, Newtonian physics
isn’t abandoned, left to decay on its garbage dump
of solid, impervious atoms, while we’re suddenly surrounded
by the subbest of subparticles
in nearly-light-speed smashatron machines the size of villages.
As if, in the hunch of our backs and the weight of our breaths,
the friendly Ptolemaic universe isn’t disowned, in favor
of Bang and expansion and ultimate cooling-to-death.
“I know I’ve got to find / Some kind of peace of mind.”
Amen and good luck. It isn’t likely, however.
The skin of the drum repulses the stick; the clarinet,
the wind. If not, the world would be empty of music.
The woman says no to the man; the man is a great
inscrutable cliff-face to the woman; and the universe we’re from
and in and made of is aswarm in antimatter.
We’re born to applause; and then we’re booed off stage;
and isn’t it true that while we’re here
we see by, and walk through, the ricocheted tonnage
of light that the planet refuses.